

H. Philip West Jr.

April 13, 2021

The Honorable Marvin Abney, Chair
HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

SUPPORT: ARTICLE 16 — Relating to Housing

Dear Chairman Abney:

Since 1970, I have served voluntarily on nonprofit boards that sought to develop affordable housing in New York, Connecticut, and Rhode Island.

I urge the Finance Committee to recommend passage of Article 16, which would (1) strengthen the RI Housing board with expertise from the Housing Resources Commission (2) establish the Housing Production Fund as a restricted receipt account, (3) create the Division of Housing and Community Development with executive responsibility for housing, (4) create a structure for coordinating the work of municipalities and nonprofits in affordable housing and services to homeless people, (5) establish a strategic plan for statewide efforts in these areas, (6) direct the governor to appoint an executive director to advance this effort, (7) create specific Housing Incentives for Municipalities capable of overcoming long-standing resistance to affordable housing efforts in cities and towns across Rhode Island, and (8) establish an additional real estate conveyance tax on the sale of properties worth more than \$700,000.

The administration projects \$2.6 million in FY22 and \$5.7 million in subsequent years — a vital stream of funds vitally needed for affordable housing in Rhode Island.

During the pandemic, property owners across Rhode Island have reaped incalculable wealth from soaring prices; many buyers are offering significantly more than listed prices. In this sellers' market, families at the lower end of the scale have been overwhelmed.

The 2020 Rhode Island Housing Fact Book (HousingWorksRI at Roger Williams University) documents the fact that even before the pandemic, lower income families struggled to find safe housing anywhere in Rhode Island.

Budget Article 16 will create a coherent system for raising and wisely administering a stream of revenue for affordable housing. Thousands of Rhode Island families desperately need your help to get safe and affordable housing. I urge passage.

With cordial best wishes,



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